Community Safety Select Committee

Review of Alley Gates

Outline Scope

Scrutiny Chair (Project Director): Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy	**Contact details:** ann.mccoy@stockton.gov.uk
Scrutiny Officer (Project Manager): Gary Woods	**Contact details:** gary.woods@stockton.gov.uk 01642 526187
Departmental Link Officer: Richard Bradford (SBC Community Safety Manager)	**Contact details:** richard.bradford@stockton.gov.uk

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

Reviewing the current and future position on alley gates is closely linked to building healthy and resilient communities. Effective use of gates contributes directly to public safety by protecting properties and creating safe enclosed spaces for community use – this fosters a sense of security and wellbeing among residents.

Furthermore, this topic has direct links into both the Partnership and Regeneration 'missions' of the *Powering Our Future* (POF) programme whilst also ensuring financial stability of the organisation in the future.

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

> *'Alley gates are lockable gates installed to prevent access by offenders to alleyways, such as those which run along the rear of older-style terraced housing in the UK. While normally a burglary prevention tool, alley gates can also prevent other crimes such as littering and anti-social behaviour by preventing access to alleys by non-residents and better controlling the space. Alley gates are usually made of iron or steel and are bespoke in relation to the requirements and specifications of an individual alley. The residents of homes adjacent to the gated alley are then left to operate the gates, either using keys or a key code.'* (College of Policing)

The alley gate programme in Stockton-on-Tees was initiated in 2001 following a pilot scheme in Newtown in which three alleyways were gated using eight alley gates. The programme was introduced as a community safety measure aimed at reducing crime, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and fear of crime in residential areas experiencing high levels of these issues. An evaluation carried out in 2008 by Cleveland Police demonstrated that alley gates were effective in reducing crime and ASB, with an overall reduction of 55% in incidents in the 12 months following installation, and reductions of up to 88% in some locations.

After the Newtown pilot, the programme was expanded across the Borough, primarily within wards experiencing higher levels of deprivation and crime. By 2012-2013, a total of 327 alley gates had been installed, providing security benefits to approximately 4,643 properties.

The dedicated alley gate installation programme and associated budget came to an end in 2012-2013. Since that time, any new gates have been delivered through the Community Participation Budget (CPB), subject to legislative criteria being met. Some of the more recently installed gates have been re-used from housing regeneration areas. Currently, the Council continues to manage 327 alley gates across the Borough, with the oldest approaching 14 years-old and the average age of the asset base being just under nine years.

In 2014-2015, 109 fault reports were recorded, equating to an average repair cost of £114 per fault. Faults arise from a combination of vandalism and general wear and tear, with repeat issues occurring in areas experiencing ongoing ASB. All gates are subject to an annual programme of scheduled maintenance, which includes general inspections and routine works such as greasing of hinges. In addition, unscheduled reactive repairs are undertaken in response to fault reports. However, dedicated budget provision for alley gate maintenance has remained static since 2012-2013 and is forecast to be exhausted (forecast maintenance and repair costs show a rising trend as the asset base continues to age).

The alley gate programme has historically delivered clear community safety benefits; however, the asset base has now reached a stage where increasing maintenance costs, ageing infrastructure, and the lack of a long-term funding strategy present growing challenges. The main aims for this review will therefore be to assess whether existing arrangements continue to meet local needs, provide value for money and support wider community safety and environmental protection objectives, and to inform future policy on the use of current and future alley gates in Stockton-on-Tees.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

What legislation is relevant to the use of alley gates?

What are the benefits of installing alley gates; what challenges are created by using them?

Where in the Borough are alley gates in place; what condition are they in; how effective have they been?

How much does it cost to install, maintain and replace alley gates; what has been spent on this provision? What is the dedicated budget for maintenance and why is this no longer available?

What are the likely ramifications if alley gates are removed? Are there any viable alternatives to alley gates that may be more cost-effective?

How do residents of homes adjacent to gated alleys feel about the value / effectiveness of this community safety measure?

What is the Council's preferred option regarding the future use of alley gates across the Borough? If they continue to be valued, what funding will be available to support them?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Council, Cabinet, emergency services, local housing associations, residents.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

5 months (report to Cabinet in February 2027)

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

- College of Policing: Alley Gating (https://www.college.police.uk/research/crime-reduction-toolkit/alley-gating)
- Stockton-on-Tees: Alley Gates (https://www.stockton.gov.uk/alley-gates)

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)	*What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?*
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) • Community Safety • Care For Your Area • Housing Services	➢ Location / condition of Borough's alley gates ➢ Benefits / challenges created ➢ Budgets / costs for installation / maintenance ➢ Future policy options / considerations
SBC Ward Councillors	➢ Views on this community safety measure
Cleveland Police	➢ Benefits / challenges created (e.g. access) ➢ Impact of removal / viable alternatives
Cleveland Fire Brigade	➢ Benefits / challenges created (e.g. access)
Housing Associations	➢ Views on this community safety measure
Town / Parish Councils	➢ Views on this community safety measure
Residents Associations / Community Groups	➢ Views on this community safety measure

How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)

Committee meetings, reports, research, resident engagement, site visits (TBC).

How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?

Committee meetings, information submissions.

How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. This review will be mindful of these factors.

How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030: *Community Safety: To make Stockton-on-Tees a safer place where people are protected from serious harm and live in communities which are safer and welcoming* (Focus Area 3: Everyone lives in healthy and sustainable places and communities)

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and / or transformation:

A review of alley gates provides an opportunity to assess current performance and drive efficiencies by moving from a predominantly reactive maintenance model to a more planned, risk-based approach. By identifying gates with recurring faults, evaluating value for money, and aligning investment with areas of greatest need, the Council may be able to reduce repeat demand, manage future replacement costs more effectively, and identify potential savings through improved asset management and prioritisation.

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	**July 2026**	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	**13.07.26**	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	**30.07.26**	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed	**TBC**	Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence	SBC Community Safety SBC Care For Your Area Cleveland Police SBC Housing Services Thirteen Housing Group Other Council Approaches	**01.10.26** **22.10.26** **26.11.26**	Select Committee
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	**07.01.27**	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	**January 2027**	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	**15.01.27**	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	**28.01.27**	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	**[23.03.27]**	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet / Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	**15.02.27**	Cabinet / Approving Body